WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD ZINE
6

Dear Reader...

Welcome to The Wonderful World zine!

Stone Ocean's ending left quite an impact on fans of Jojo. Some consider this conclusion to be sad–after all, the characters we spent so much time with are now gone. But our team thinks that this is the happiest ending the original universe could've received.

It's a world where the Joestar Curse, which has tormented the series' titular family for generations, no longer exists. Jolyne may be Irene, but her relationship with her father is seemingly strong and healthy. Anasui may be Anakiss, but he's been able to find love. Ermes may be Eldis (according to the anime's credits), but her sister is still alive. And of course there's Emporio, who now has a chance to live in a safer, happier world.

We didn't get to see much of this new universe. Main characters such as Weather Report, Foo Fighters, and Jotaro didn't even get a confirmed new identity. This zine aims to explore the potential of this world and ALL the characters who live in it.

Every piece is based on a contributor's personal headcanon. That's what makes Irene's universe so special: it has the potential to be *anything,* and it's up to us fans to decide what it looks like!

Please enjoy this labor of love. **Thank you all.**

Best,
TWW Mod Team

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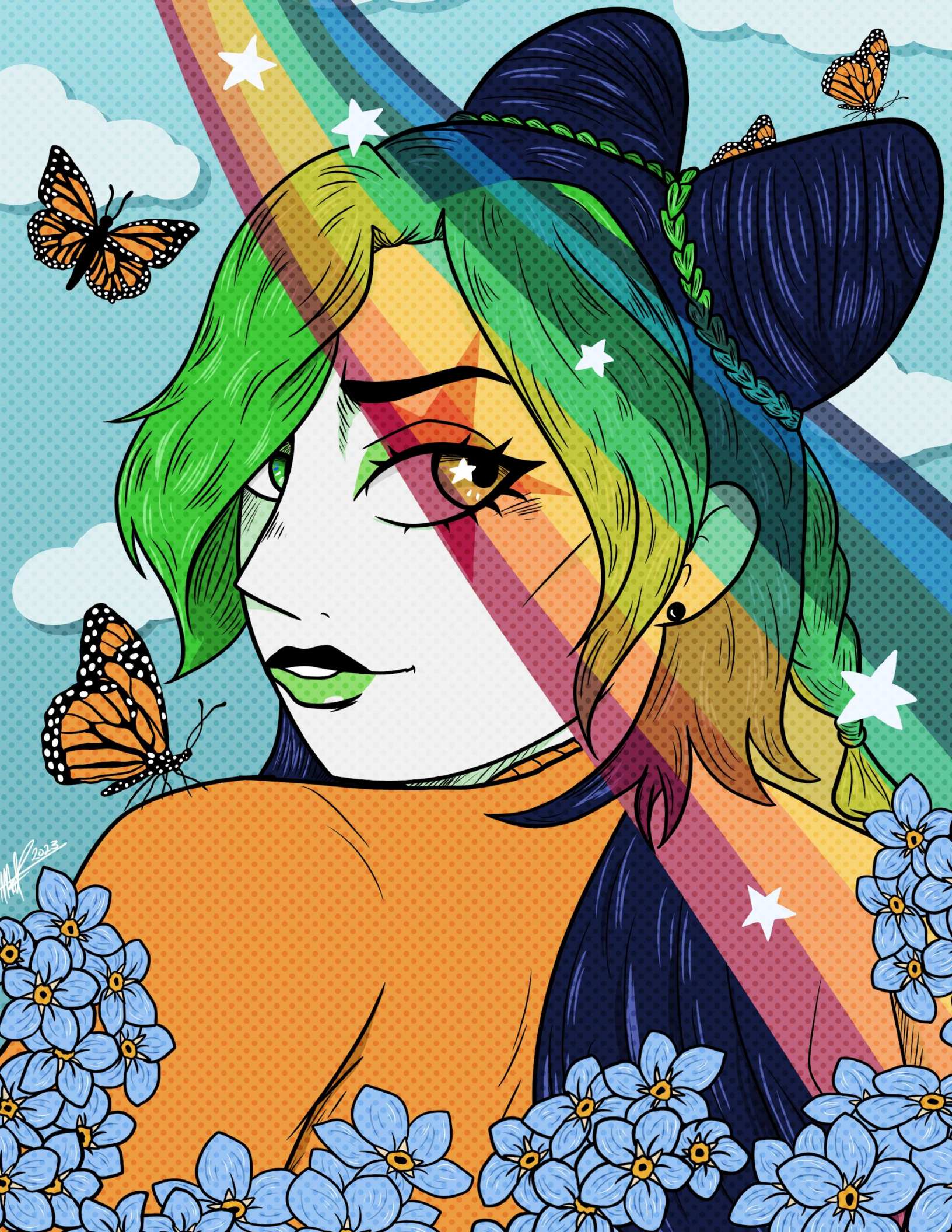
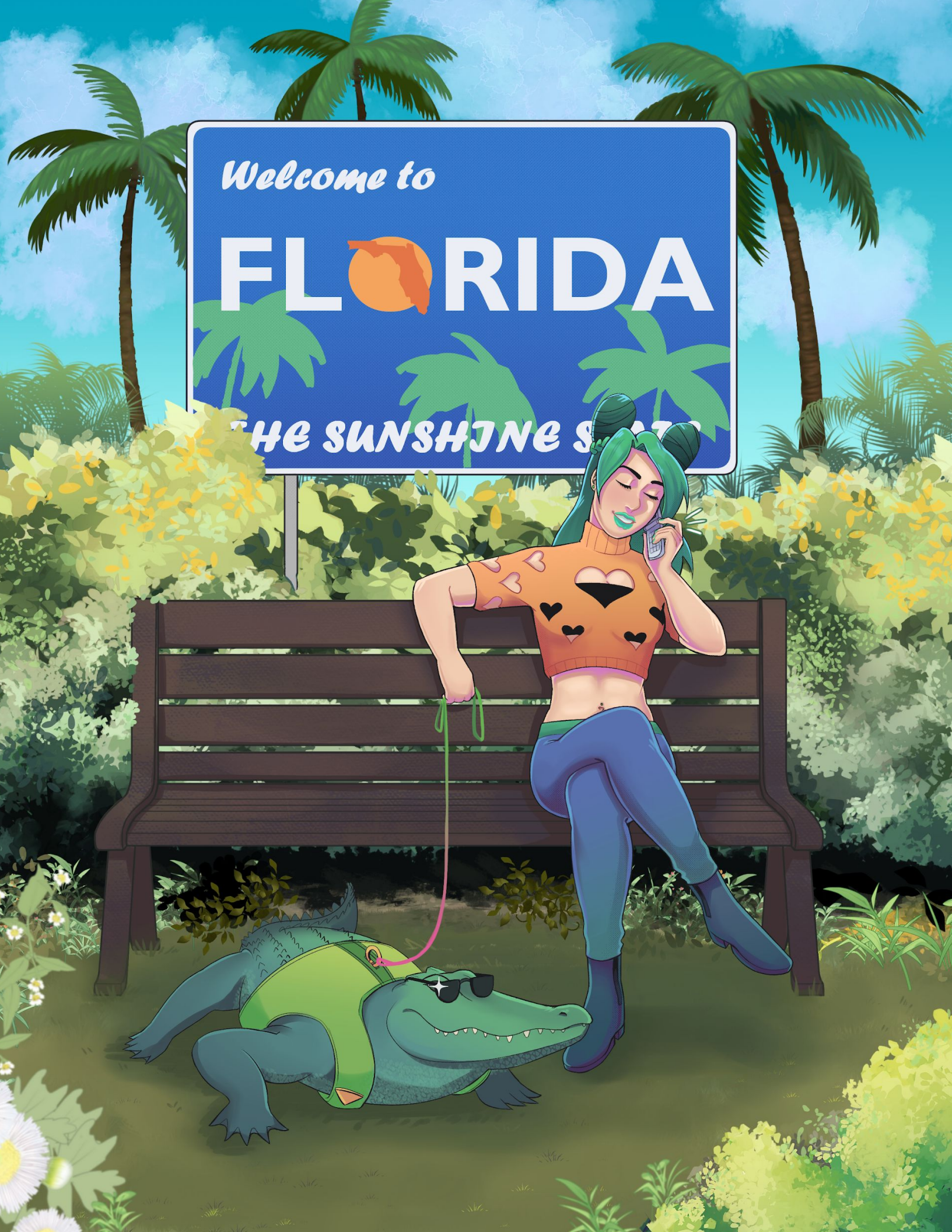
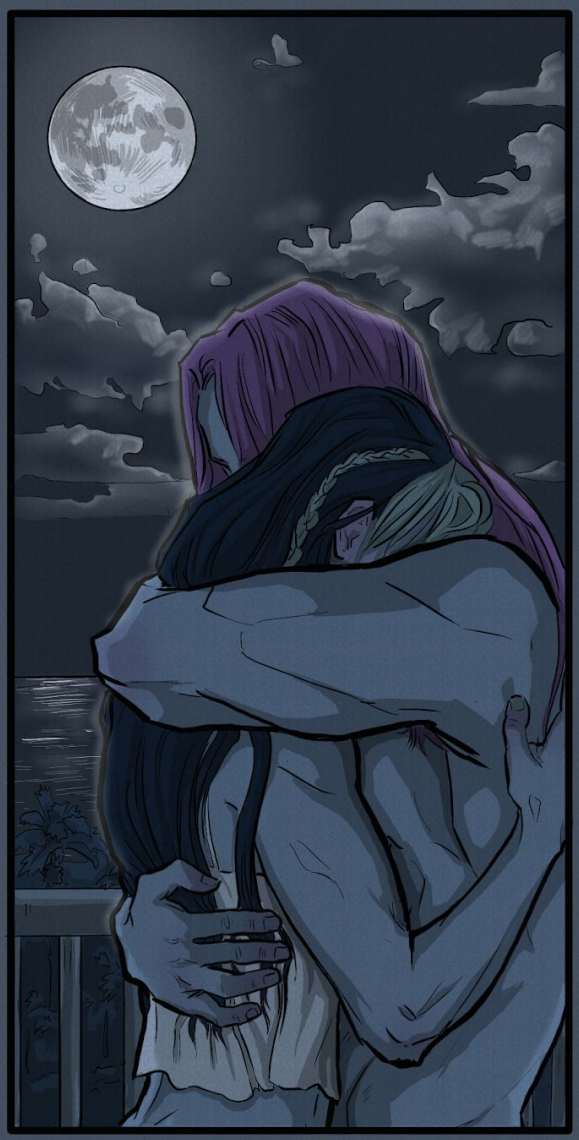



Welcome to
FLORIDA

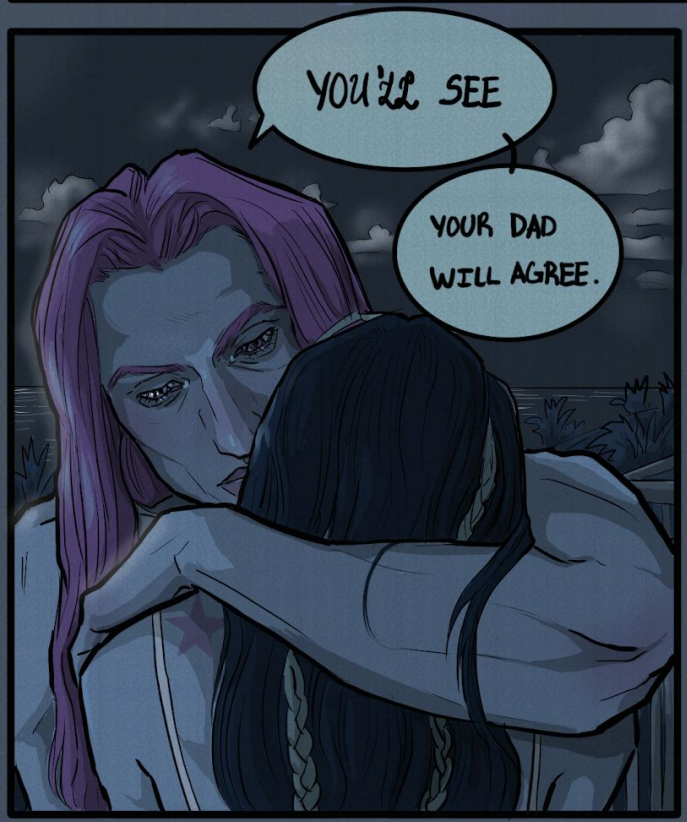
HEY.
COULDN'T SLEEP?
...
YOU'RE WORRYING AGAIN, HUH?
YOU KNOW I CAN'T HELP IT.

IRENE
...
LOOK AT ME.
YOU KNOW I WOULD LAY DOWN MYLIFE FOR YOU...
... RIGHT?
WHY
...
... WHY ARE YOU SAYING THIS SO SUDDENLY?
I'M JUST MAKING SURE YOU KNOW...
... HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU.

OH...
I LOVE YOU TOO...



COME HERE.


YOU'LL SEE
YOUR DAD WILL AGREE.

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

Young and Fine

rapscallionrabbit

West received an email from a woman he did not know.

An unexpected surprise, to say the least. Especially since it arrived in his work email, through which no one besides his suppliers ever reached out to him. Rather than immediately pitching the message into his trash folder, however, he allowed his intrigue to take hold of him. After all, who wouldn't be pulled in by such a bold subject line?

Subject: I am your sister

From: p.pucci74@gmail.com
To: westbluemarine@winn-dixie.com

He couldn't immediately deny this claim. Growing up, his mother and father made it clear that he's an adoptee, knowing next to nothing about his mysterious birth. All they could say for certain was his birthday, weight, and that he was born with a head full of hair inside a shady Floridian hospital.

Vague senses of curiosity surrounding his biological background plagued West. On the other hand, he held an overall content stance with the way his life turned out–growing up in a loving home, creating a life for himself, holding a stable position at a job that allowed him to put food on the table

and money into a savings account. West Bluemarine thrived in a comfortable position.

At the end of the day, he would be fine with not having a sister. If fate called him to be an only child, then an only child he would be. Yet in that same vein, if fate where to determine anything about his life, then maybe it directed “p.pucci74” in his direction for a reason. Maybe she really is his sister. If she isn’t, then she simply brought an air of interest to the start of his bland work week.

So, he read on.

Dear West,

I want to apologize for reaching out to you through such unconventional means. If I could’ve reached out to you through a personal email address or Facebook then I would’ve. But you’re pretty much off the grid. This is the only contact I could find, and it might not even be you.

Anyways, my name is Paula Pucci. I’m 38 years old and live in West Palm Beach, Florida. A month ago, my brother Enrico passed away–

West took a moment to pause. Five sentences in and it was already a heavy topic that he found himself being subjected to. What in the world was this Paula woman trying to get him involved with? He couldn’t help but feel as though he should have stopped reading then and there, avoid any unnecessary strife that may be trying to enter his life. Yet he continued to read.

–He was a private man, and his death was honestly a tragedy. It was out of the blue and unexpected. But that's my brother for you. No one could ever quite tell you what he was up to at a given time. Since he died unmarried and childless, it was up to me to sort through all his things.

For a bit of context, Enrico was technically my half brother. He never knew who his biological father was, and our mother never disclosed that to him. So finding the ancestry DNA test and their results hiding among his files wasn't a complete surprise. Mysterious and curious. That is the best way to describe my brother.

Maybe he wouldn't have wanted me to look through the results. But he wasn't there to tell me no, so I looked anyway. Can you imagine my surprise when I discovered that Enrico has a twin living in Louisiana–?

Another pause. Conscious thought forced him to loosen the death grip he had on his computer mouse. A deep inhalation of air swept up into his nostrils, followed by a shaky exhale that parted through his lips. "Christ," He mumbled, hands moving to rub at his face. The Paula's implications were definitely kicking his work week off with a strong start.

–Domingo Pucci. That's the name our mother gave you. It took hours of searching through public records to figure out you don't go by that name, though. Mom obviously kept this a secret from me and Enrico, so it took even more hours to build up the nerve and ask her if it was true that she gave one of her babies up for adoption. As you may have guessed by now, the answer she gave was yes.

I would like to meet you, in person. This obviously doesn't happen immediately–you have your own life, and I have mine. And if you don't want to meet then that's fine too. In either case I feel as though you deserve to know more about my family, and myself and Mom would like to know some more about you.

Please write back to me as soon as you can, or if you even want to. We can exchange phone numbers and figure out plans then.

Best,
Paula Pucci

That Friday, West found himself leaving work early. A red backpack waited for him in the passenger seat of his ancient pickup truck, along with a change of clothes consisting of a jumpsuit and his telpek, a piece of headgear that made him quite infamous among his peers. Best to bring as much of his personality with him as possible to meet his half-sister.

All things considered, the total drive was completely manageable – 11 hours from New Orleans to West Palm Beach. West planned on camping in his van before reaching the border between Alabama and Florida. He'd then wake up early, making it just in time to have brunch with Paula.

At 11am on Saturday, West walked into the parking lot of an IHop, his engine sputtering to a stop when he parked the truck. But the buzzing excitement that rang in his ears made him ignorant to the noise. All he could think of was the fact that less than one hundred feet away, he had a blood relative waiting for him. It was the sort of fantasy he'd have as a child sitting in any public area, eyes scanning every stranger that shared the slightest

similarity to him.

Checking his pockets for his wallet, West stepped into the lot. His steps contained an uncharacteristic energy to them, forcing him to push body weight onto the tips of his toes. He could feel beads of sweat beginning to form beneath his hat, a result of humid Floradin heat and his nerves.

He entered the restaurant.Immediately greeting him in the waiting room was a woman, who looked from where she sat with eyes blown wide.

Long, blonde hair cascaded down her back, every strand pinched into a tight coil. Shiny red and silver beads decorated the bangs that framed her face, defining the slim curve of her cheekbones. Her skin tone took on a warm ochre color, the shade reminiscent of bottom sides of clouds during a sunset.

She blinked up at West, standing. “Are you–”

“West,” He interrupted. “West Bluemarine.”

A beaming grin spread across her face. “West! Oh my God, hi!”

“Hey,” A shaky smile stretched West’s lips. “You’re Paula.”

Paula nodded, humming out a squeaky ‘mhm!’ from the back of her throat. She further approached West, reaching out to grab hold of his hands. “Yes, that’s me–Paula Pucci. Gosh, you look so much like Enrico!”

“I do?”

“Well, in the face at least. I brought some photos. Let’s get a booth and I’ll show them to you, yeah?.”

Paula wasn’t kidding. He and Enrico shared quite a few key features: strikingly white tufts of hair, square jaw bones made of sharp angles, and even identical noses. Differences were also present, though. Enrico appeared to be a much slimmer man, whose complexion took on a deeper shade than West’s.

All other factors considered, it remained undeniable that this man is his brother. And he’s never going to be able to meet him.

“Enrico was a priest,” Paula explained, pulling a new image from her shoebox of photos. Presented in her grasp was a photo of Enrico, standing behind a pew while he gave a sermon of some kind. “He specialized in working with former inmates and troubled youth.”

“That’s noble of him,” West commented, taking the photo from Paula’s grasp to examine it more closely.

She simply shrugged, raising a short white mug of coffee to her lips before speaking. “That’s one way to think of it. I think he did it out of guilt. Enrico was involved with a lot of rough people as a kid.”

Jutting his lip out, West passed a glance Paula’s way. “Are you talking about gangs?”

“No, just… Bad people. It’s the church, you never know who you’re going to run into. Unfortunately.”

Humming in understanding, West handed the photo back to Paula. “So you’re religious too, then.”

“Me? No,” Paula waved West off, putting the photograph back in the box before tucking it away under the table. “I haven’t been to church since I was fourteen. Mom stopped forcing me to go with her at that point.”

“Right. Mom.”

A thick air of silence took over the brother and sister, only for a moment. Their waitress arrived at their table with impeccable timing, holding plates exuding tempting smells of syrup and cooked meat. French toast topped with strawberries and bananas were placed in front of West, alongside a serving of over-easy eggs and hashbrowns. Paula got hashbrowns and sausage links served with scrambled eggs, accompanied by a short stack of pancakes. Both muttered polite acknowledgements towards the waitress before they started to eat.

Stabbing an egg curd onto her fork, Paula sighed. “She didn’t want to give you away. It was just too difficult for her to take care of two babies at the time.”

“I’m not mad at her,” West immediately clarified, popping a banana slice in his mouth.

“You aren’t?”

“I mean,” He sighed. “No, not really.”

“Why?”

Which, in some respects, was a valid question. West felt as though he was supposed to be mad. But he just couldn't find any lingering semblance of anger within. Maybe it's because he's older and holding resentment feels like a waste of time. Or perhaps his curiosity was never as strong as he thought it was. So, he shrugged.

Paula could only stare for the following few moments. Her shoulders deflated and she looked down at her plate. "Well, that's really mature of you."

"I'm 40 years old," He chuckled, cutting out a bite of french toast. "I would hope that I could be mature."

She laughed at the sentiment, shaking her head. Yet her gaze remained fixated on the plate, a melancholy feeling exuding off her. "She would've taken her secret to the grave if I never confronted her about it. The secret being you, of course."

"The whole experience was probably traumatizing for her," West reflected aloud. "I can't even imagine what she was going through when she gave birth to me and Enrico."

"Do you want to ask her?"

Such a question easily grabbed West's attention. He quirked an eyebrow at Paula, who's chin was still pointed down. A light dusting of red coated her cheeks as she spoke. "I wanted to invite you to come meet her after this. She's back home with my dad right now."

"Why'd she stay at home?"

Paula tensed ever so slightly. Her fork haphazardly moved food around her plate while her lips remained shut. West continued to fill the silence, “Your initial email suggested that she’d be coming with you. I don’t mind, I’m just curious–”

“She’s in hospice care right now.”

A million thoughts raced through West’s head upon hearing the news. But among the incomprehensible jumble of words that coursed through his mind, only two words rang clear: *“Poor Paula.”*

He didn’t know what to do. Would she want to be comforted? Maybe he could hold her hand, or pull her into a side-hug. Or maybe she would rather not think about it. Perhaps she’d rather focus on her remaining family instead of those who are slipping between her fingertips.

West spoke the next phrase that came to mind: “How long does she have?”

Paula sniffled. “She’s still in the early stages, so a while.”

“I could’ve just gone directly to you. We didn’t have to meet here first.”

“Honestly,” Paula finally looked up, a bittersweet smile on her face as she wiped her eyes. “I wanted to be away from her for a little bit. It’s just hard, you know?”

“I don’t. But I can imagine how it could be.”

Paula chuckled, “Enrico would’ve said something very similar to that. He was always so literal.”

“He sounds like a dick.”

Now they were both laughing, their chuckles contained. “He was! He really was,” Paula sighed, wiping the final tears from her eyes. “But I love him.”

The remainder of their meal passed with few to no hiccups. Time passed with pleasant conversation and sips of watery coffee. Lunch rush eventually began to slow to a halt, leaving the two with a feeling of obligation to pay their bill and get on with their day.

“You go ahead and get a head start,” West stated, holding the door open for Paula, “I should probably re-fuel my gas tank before I hit the road again.”

“Are you sure?” Paula questioned, walking alongside her half brother to his beat-up red truck. “I don’t mind waiting a bit.”

Giving the younger woman a nod, West smiled. “I’m sure you’re anxious to get going.”

Paula sighed, “I am. Dad’s been updating me about Mom’s every move ever since I got here.”

“Is she alright?”

“Yes! He’s just a worry-wart.”

They shared another tame laugh, which gradually devolved into silence. Before West could say another word, Paula was wrapping her arms around him in a hug. “I’m glad we got to meet, West.”

It took him a couple seconds, but West eventually hugged his sister back. “Yeah. I’m glad, too.”

Holding each other in the embrace for a few seconds longer, Paula was the first to let go. She hiked her bag further up on her shoulder, a dainty grin raising her cheeks. “Just give me a call if you need help with directions or anything.”

West nodded, finally waving her off. He watched as Paula backed her car out of a parking spot. She drove out of the parking lot and onto the road, honking at her brother when she caught a glimpse of him in her rearview mirror.

Planning to follow her lead, West unlocked his truck and hopped into his front seat. Inserting his keys into the emission, he was greeted with a discouraging rumble from his engine. He tried turning it on a few more times, but was continued to be met with the same sound.

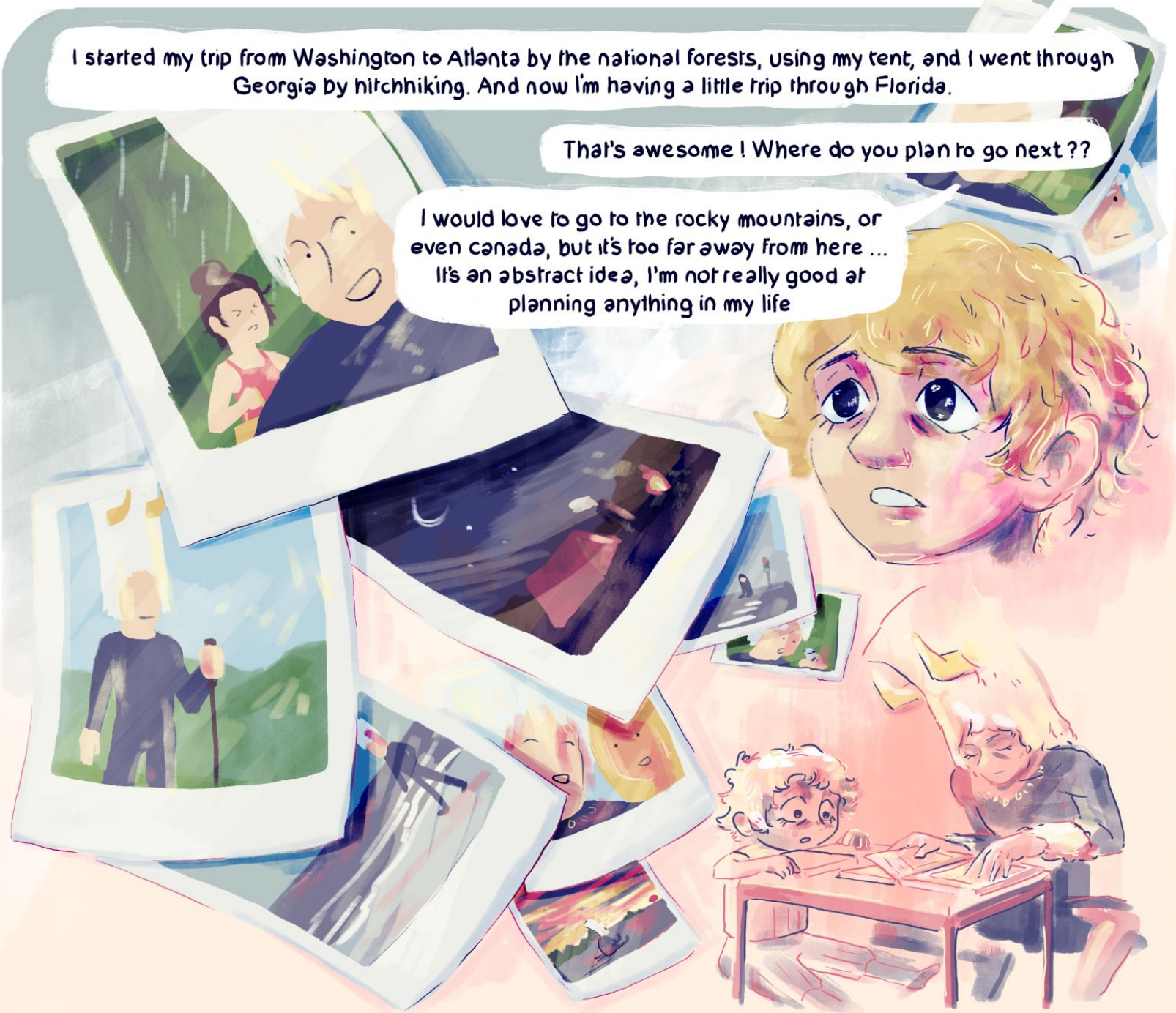
Cursing, he grabbed his phone from his back pocket. All he had to do was call a towing company and see if Paula could loop around and pick him up. Which would be easy, if it weren’t for the fact his battery died sometime during their brunch.

Irritation waved over West, but he tried to let it go with a deep breath. There had to be some way for him to get to Paula’s still. Looking in his mirror, he spotted the backpack with all his stuff still inside.

Hitchhiking was always worth a shot.

And you, where are you going ?
Nowhere special, I have all my stuff in my backpack, I just travel randomly. It's rainy today so I would like to stop at an hotel if possible.

Whoaaaa that's so cool !
Where have you already been ?


I started my trip from Washington to Atlanta by the national forests, using my tent, and I went through Georgia by hitchhiking. And now I'm having a little trip through Florida.
That's awesome ! Where do you plan to go next ??
I would love to go to the rocky mountains, or even canada, but it's too far away from here ... It's an abstract idea, I'm not really good at planning anything in my life

Weather! I have a question for you !

What is it ?

What kind of place out here do you want to see the most ?

I don't know, maybe the desert or the mountains ?

And you ?

I want to go to a forest and see some deers !!!!

I definitely want to see that too !!

The truth is ... I dont really have preferences about specific landscapes ...

I definitely want to see pretty ones, but I'm mostly curious about how people live outside of prison ...

Oh ! He is crying again !!

Do you want a tissue, kid ?

Wooa ! are you okay ?

Aerial Artistic

First Impressions

Alex

Anakiss was making an atrocious first impression on Irene's father.

It had started by proposing without his permission, something Irene had made absolutely clear that he would not like. Now he was scrambling across country to meet a man who already disliked him, desperate to redeem himself, and truly only making it worse.

Next had been running out of gas halfway through the journey, and leaving his wallet at home. The change in his pocket covered nothing more than the call Irene had made on the payphone, to explain to her dad why she would be home much later than intended.

It was awfully nice of her to leave it at *'home later than intended'* and not *'stranded in the desert, the closest building being a high security prison with no money, no gas, and no hope at making my father like you.'*

He leaned against the hood of his car, thanking whatever seriously lacking luck he had that, at the very least, they'd been able to push their car a few hundred yards to a garage.

Pulling his hat down over his eyes to protect himself from the glare of the sun, he wished he could do the same to avoid the glare he would inevitably face from Jotaro Kujo. If only he could wallow in his misery, feel it so fully that he descended into the earth, or dive into it and avoid the harsh reality that everything was going wrong.

It was becoming apparent he had dressed incorrectly for the weather, too. Fashion had preceded practicality. Irene had mentioned her father's keen eye for aesthetics, and, determined to show himself as a man worthy of

marrying Irene, he'd worn his newest and best. The grey skies gathering overhead, making his lowered hat unnecessary, taunted him. Even in this, he could not make a good impression.

'Hey!' an incensed voice bellowed, wholly uncaring that Anakiss was in his own little world of despair. 'Hey! wait, you bastard! He tossed my luggage and started driving! You seeing this shit? The bus drove off because *you* were so friggin slow, kid! And it's gonna be two hours until the next bus comes! What the hell do you expect me to do, huh? Hey, are you even listening to me? Shit, shit, *shit*!'

There was the sound of stomping footfall and the painful sound of boot meeting a metal bus stop sign.

It wasn't every day one observed a scene like this. Anakiss kept his hat low, his posture relaxed, his interest minimal. He had nothing to worry about. Crazy people like the lady in green yelling at the bus driving away were of little concern to him. Irene was in the car, safe and sound, and he knew very well he could protect her, if needs be.

He'd fully intended to ignore the lady and the child she was yelling at- never one to get involved in a parent and child's dispute- until he heard the magic words.

'Shit, do you think that garage will split a fifty?'

'Hey!' Anakiss called, attracting the lady's attention. Tall, pretty, with an athletic build, the lady glared at him as if offended that he had distracted her from watching the bus drive into the distance. 'My car is out of gas. If you give us gas money, I'll take you and your son wherever you want to go.'

'That kid's not my son,' she said quickly.

'Well then, *you* got money, kid?' Anakiss asked. He didn't care if it was her

kid or not. All he cared about was securing enough gas in his tank until he got to a bank.

‘So that’s your game, huh,’ the lady scoffed and turned away. ‘My sister warned me about sharing rides with strangers.’

The plip plop of raindrops fell on Anakiss’ hat rhythmically.

‘Looks like a storm is coming,’ he said lightly. ‘I guess you can just wait in the rain for the next two hours until the next bus comes then.’

‘Anakiss,’ a light voice chided. ‘Don’t mess with strangers. You know that’s not nice.’

Anakiss turned to see Irene stick her head out of the car window.

‘Get in, kid. We’re not bad people, promise. Where are your parents?’ She sounded concerned at the sight of a child alone. When he didn’t answer, she prompted a little more, a soft smile soothing on her face. ‘We’re going to see my father, you know. If it goes well, maybe Anakiss won’t be my boyfriend for much longer, and we can get married.’

The little boy looked shocked, trembling with tear filled eyes.

Anakiss figured he’d been dumped by parents, or tasked to make a journey alone; a child his age was much too little to be left unaided. It hurt, but he knew all too well how it felt to be a child left to fend for himself. His own childhood had been a troubled one. His back then time seemed to exist only in institutions or juvenile centres. He knew a scared child when he saw it. He didn’t dissuade Irene’s suggestion that the child join them.

‘Ah, shit,’ a voice called, the woman from before sprinting back towards the car, clambering into the back seat. ‘There really is a storm coming, but you’re not getting more than ten dollars out of me, you hear me? If you’re gonna give me a ride, drop me off at Cape Canaveral.’

Irene looked at the child, as if waiting for him to do the same: agree to the trip and state his destination. Before Anakiss could stop her, though, Irene had climbed from the car, pulling off her sweater and tugging it around the child's shoulders.

'You look freezing, come on. Oh, look, you're shaking. Don't worry. I won't take your money, neither will he,' she said, gesturing to Anakiss, shooting him a wordless look. 'Come on, get in the car.'

Anakiss let Irene and the child have a moment. She was much kinder than he was, he trusted she could deal with the child appropriately as he and the woman- Ermes- bartered on how much the ride would cost her.

Thirty dollars, two new passengers and a half tank of gas later, Anakiss was ready to continue his journey. He wouldn't go as far as to say things were looking up, but it was hard not to see an improvement after hitting rock bottom.

'Hey! A hitchhiker! Anakiss, pull over.' Irene exclaimed.

'I'm not picking up another person, Irene,' Anakiss lamented. 'Two strays are more than enough.'

'You were the one who said a storm was coming!' Irene bit back. 'Stop the car… that poor guy.'

'You're too soft, you know that?' Anakiss grouched. But he pulled over the car all the same.

Soon, there were three people in the back seat, and, true to his expectation, a sky that looked like it was about to split in two any moment. Florida was no stranger to sudden changes in the weather, but it wasn't shaping up to be a nice trip.

'Where are you headed?' Anakiss asked the newest of the throng.

‘I don’t know,’ the man answered. His voice was soft, and almost fully drowned out by the sound of the rain, but the car interior was intimate enough he could be heard. ‘Wherever the road takes me.’

‘I like that,’ Irene mused aloud. ‘Wherever the road takes me. Why don’t you come with us for a while?’

The man shrugged, and Irene smiled, entirely ignoring Anakiss’ scowl.

‘How lucky,’ Irene mused aloud.

To Anakiss, this was nothing new for his girlfriend. She had always been intimately in tune with the threads of fate which bound one person to another. She had confided once that she believed the reason they were so happy together was due to their connection in another life. Anakiss was not sure that was the reason, but the thought of being with Irene in more lives than just this one was too charming for him to deny. Not when the idea made her smile as much as it did.

Ever since awakening her stand abilities in her teens, Irene had struggled to separate what she thought had once been and was truly was. Reality to her was not as solid as it should have been. It wasn’t that she was crazy, or that she was sick; it was just that she was more aware than others about how easily one could hold fate in their hands. It came to her in the form of dreams, the many tangled strings that connected her past reality and her current one could not be unknotted, and she was one of those lucky enough to see those ties and thought she mightn’t have understood them implicitly, she understood their importance.

She’d tried to explain it to Anakiss before, though the information had never been as clear in his mind as it was in hers. She talked to him of brief flashes of pasts that weren’t her own, of struggles that in another future she might have had to endure.

She'd spoken of a relationship with her father, so fractured that love couldn't even heal it, and how important it was for her to maintain her relationship with her father because of it. Sometimes, she referred to it as her 'old life,' and there was pain in her eyes that seemed heavier than the years she had lived. That alone was enough to convince Anakiss of the truth in what she spoke.

That was why, when she mentioned how lucky she was they could live so happily together in this lifetime, he believed it.

Perhaps today had not been a lucky one, but Anakiss was assured that having Irene by his side was the luckiest thing of all.

'Shit.'

'What do you mean shit?'

'I mean… shit shit shit shit shit.'

'What?!' Anakiss was panicking now, and he didn't know why. Irene's sudden interest as they drove the long path up to her father's home was not what he had expected.

'We have company.'

'Who?'

Irene put her hands over her face and groaned.

'My great-grandfather … and my father's friends.'

'Your great-grandfather?! How old is he?' Ermes asked from the backseat. Despite her protestation that she simply had to get to Cape Canaveral as soon as possible, she'd changed her mind halfway through the ride and

decided to spend a little more time with Irene. They'd been getting on like a house on fire. The child, Emporio, and the hitchhiker, Weather Report, had tagged along too. It seemed like the private family affair was becoming less private by the minute.

'He's one hundred and six, I believe.'

Ermes whistled appreciatively.

'Old old.'

'Old,' Weather Report echoed.

'Did you tell my father you were asking for permission to marry me?' Irene asked, her gaze still locked on the four cars in the driveway.

'No, I mean, I said I had something important to ask him. But he's intelligent, I'm sure he's worked it out.'

'Good grief,' Irene pinched the bridge of her nose. 'I hope this is some kind of horrific coincidence.'

'You don't like your dad's friends?' Emporio asked innocently.

'It's not that!' Irene said quickly. 'I do like them. They're great actually. But… they're a lot. A lot a lot.'

'A lot?'

'A lot.'

'IRENE! MA PETITE! MON CHOU! IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG!'

It was bellowed from a distance, but sounded all too clear, even from the distance the car remained travelling down the driveway.

Irene groaned.

‘Here we go.’

A goliath of a man waved eagerly from the doorway of the large house, eagerly awaiting the car parking. His white hair, in an eccentric pompadour style, brushed the doorway. He was struggling to put on a pair of shoes whilst leaping around like he was a child full of energy, but when he managed to don them, he rushed towards the car.

‘Your father?’ Anakiss asked, a little concerned. ‘Is this Jotaro?’

‘Absolutely not,’ Irene said quickly. ‘Jean-Pierre!’ She smiled, climbing from the car only to be pulled immediately into a crushing hug.

‘Anakiss, this is Jean-Pierre, my father’s friend.’

‘Best friend!’ He corrected.

‘I think Kakyoin would disagree,’ Irene chuckled.

‘Bah, that reserved man? I’m sure a night out with those two would be the dullest event of the decade. A best friend must be *fun*!’

‘Is that so?’ A remarkably calmer voice asked, and Irene rushed to pull the man into a hug.

‘Muhammad!’

‘Well,’ Polnareff looked a little guilty, scratching the back of his head. ‘I don’t think you are dull, mon ami. Reserved perhaps. Calm.’

‘In control of my emotions?’ Avdol supplied.

‘At times,’ Polnareff grinned.

‘Irene, it has been too long. Far too long!’ Avdol said instead, indulging Polnareff and his silliness no longer and turning his attention to better places.

‘When did you come back from Egypt? What is the special occasion? It’s only November, it isn’t my dad’s birthday for months?’

‘Can’t old friends meet up?’ He smiled elusively.

‘Speaking of friends,’ a new voice added. ‘Won’t you introduce your gang?’

‘Kakyoin!’ Irene launched herself into a hug, more gently than she had the others. All her father’s friends were similar in age to him, but Kakyoin was of a frailer constitution due to his injuries sustained in his youth- Irene had learned young to treat him with a little less roughness than the others. Though in her childhood, she had pitied Kakyoin and the heavy scars on his face, scars which marred right over his eyes, as she matured, she realised why her father and his friend’s celebrated them.

The dead didn’t get the opportunity to heal injuries into scars.

‘These are new acquaintances we picked up on the way,’ Irene explained. ‘We ran into a little delay in Florida, and these guys were there to help!’

‘Oh, I see. It’s a pleasure to meet you all, I am Noriaki Kakyoin, an old friend of Irene’s father.’

‘Ermes Costello!’ Ermes introduced herself with a grin and curious gleam in her eyes, she shook Kakyoin’s hand with confidence, then Avdol's, and finally Polnareff’s. Already she was gravitating towards Polnareff, two chatterboxes eager for conversation.

‘This is Weather,’ Irene said, gesturing to the tall man who stood a little apart from the others.

He nodded to the group, but remained leaning on the car, and maintaining his distance.

‘This is Emporio.’

The child looked timid, and stayed behind Irene, but he smiled and waved a little shyly at the boisterous new group.

‘And this?’ Kakyoin asked astutely.

‘This is Anakiss. He’s my-‘

‘Irene,’ a deep voice cut through the bustling conversation.

‘Father!’ She didn’t run to his side to pull her father into a hug, he’d been strolling over quickly, just as eager to meet up with her as she was him. He was a quiet and reserved man, but his gang of friends brought something wonderful out in him. They had endured a lot in their youth, and now, in their adulthood, they recovered together. Theirs was a close relationship.

Her father was an only child, but Polnareff, Avdol, and Kakyoin were likely closer to her than a blood-related uncle would be. It was a blessing most of the time.

Today, though, it felt a little closer to a curse.

‘He’s your what?’ Jotaro asked, his voice so even it sounded completely flat. ‘ You didn’t finish your sentence Irene.’

Irene swallowed, killing a little time by pulling him into a hug. It was easier to look at her father’s shirt than directly in perceptive ocean blue eyes.

‘Anakiss,’ a voice announced, nerves making his intonation a little too loud.

‘I’m Irene’s partner. Romantic partner. We’re dating. I’m dating your daughter,’ there was a beat of complete silence. ‘Sir,’ he added hurriedly.

Another beat of profound silence.

It was broken soon by Polnareff and Ermes snorting before falling into peals of stomach clenching laughter.

‘Smooth, young man,’ Avdol smirked, making it clear it had been anything but.

‘Why don’t you and I step inside and have a little chat… Anakiss?’ Jotaro asked coolly. He held Irene close, not letting her pull from his grasp, so she could not glare at him. It was a wise decision. If looks could kill, Jotaro would have found himself in considerable danger from his daughter’s ire.

‘Okay,’ Anakiss said, striding over to join Irene.

‘It’ll be okay,’ he murmured, his hand entwining with hers for just a second.

Polnareff’s second snort told the group, perhaps it wouldn’t be.

‘Don’t use your stand. Don’t hit him. Don’t be… weird… weirder than usual,’ Irene warned.

‘Best behaviour,’ Anakiss promised a hand sweeping his long pink hair like he hadn’t a care in the world.

Irene’s expression told the group she didn’t believe that for one moment. After all, she better than most would know that playing with his hair was a nervous trait. She watched them walk away, deaf to the snickering of the people surrounding her.

‘Dad’s gonna kill him, isn’t he?’ she mourned aloud.

‘Probably,’ Avdol and Kakyoin said in unison.

‘Absolutely,’ Polnareff and Ermes agreed.

‘He brought you guys here on purpose, didn’t he?’

‘Yup!’ Polnareff grinned unabashed. ‘Joseph, too! Your grandfather is inside. Anakiss is likely on his way to meet him now.

Joseph Joestar was a wild card of a man. With more energy as a

centenarian than most had in their sixties, he was unpredictable. Would he smile and greet her boyfriend, would he challenge him to an arm-wrestle?

Irene looked hesitantly to Emporio.

'I think it'll go well. Your dad is understanding,' Emporio comforted.

Irene didn't know why she believed the child so easily. But there were odder things in life than an astute child. She looked at the retreating figures for another long moment. In her dreams, where her reality blurred, and what was truth and what was dreams combined, Irene could imagine her father and Anakiss meeting in a way so similar to this moment, and yet worlds apart.

They stood on the roof of a building she didn't recognise but felt familiarity for. Surrounded by faces she'd never once been able to recognise, but now, wondered if it could possibly have been Ermes and Emporio. It was hard to recall, dreams were ethereal, never quite so grounded in her memory that the only reason she could recall them at all was because she kept meticulous note of them in her diary, though the fear she felt then could linger in her mind for days.

Her heart was pounding in her chest like this moment, for entirely different reasons. In the dream, she'd been terrified, adrenaline pumping had been fear, and not anticipation.

'Mr Jotaro. I want your permission here and now to marry your daughter.'

A long second of silence passed so long that Irene wondered if Jotaro would respond at all.

'What did you say?' a flat voice edged with a tinge of ire asked. 'You-'

'I know this isn't the time,' he said quickly. 'All you have to do is give me

permission. If … if you say yes… those words could save me. I don't expect to immediately be able to marry her. It's true I'm a criminal, a bad man, I don't deny it. And I know she won't fall in love with me just like that. But her strong will and pure heart that she inherited from you… is the light that shines on the darkness of my heart. My heart that could collapse at any moment. She's what I need right now!'

In the end, Irene never heard her father's response to her boyfriend's sudden request.

Perhaps that was for the best.

She'd seen her father's expression and she could guess things would not end too successfully for her boyfriend.

She sighed and walked back over to Emporio. It was easier to worry about others than herself for the moment.

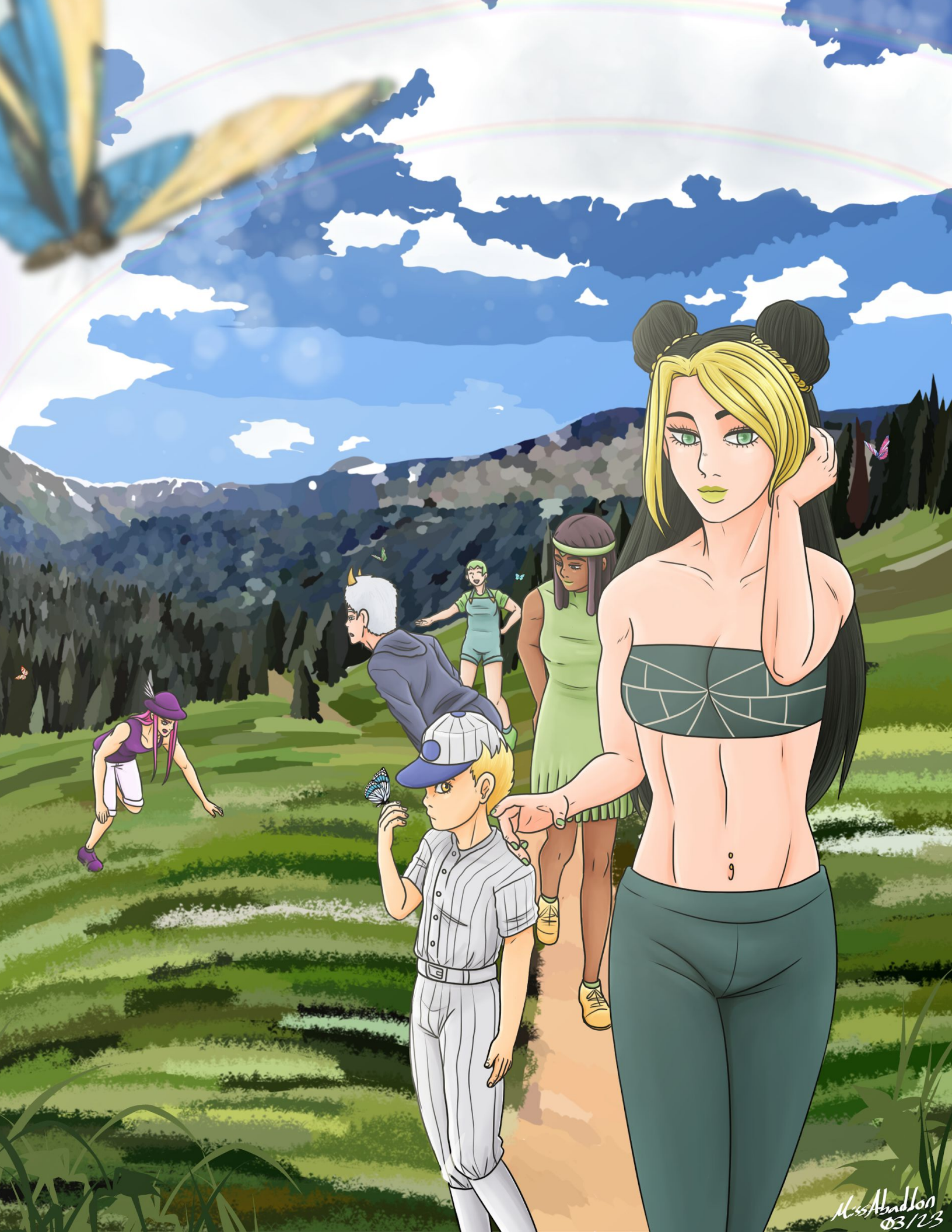
'You hungry? Thirsty?'

The child shook his head but accepted her hand when she held it out. He was quiet around the other, as if facing an exhaustion she couldn't begin to fathom.

'I guess if this is the most stressful moment of my life, I've had a lucky life, huh?'

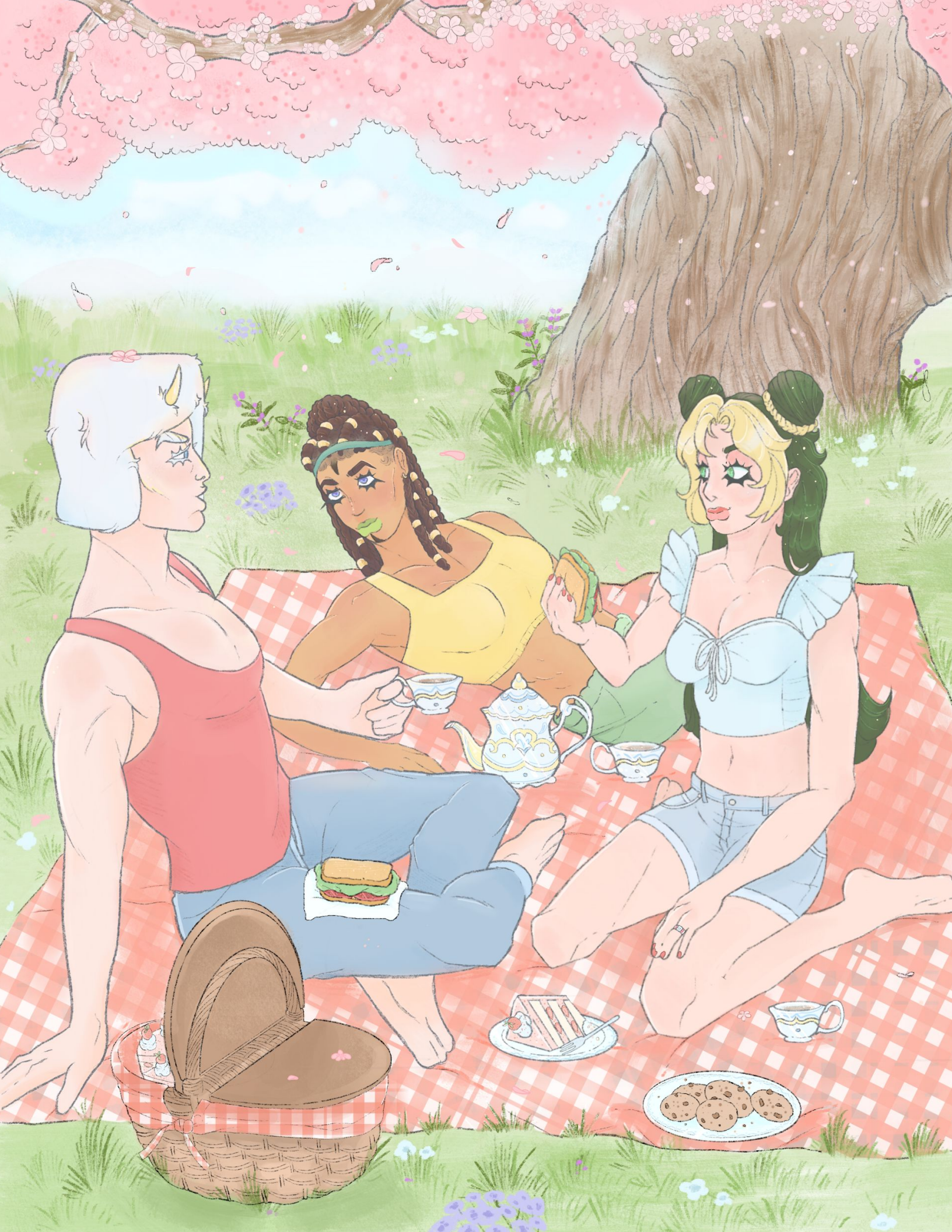
Emporio looked at her, his gold eyes astute, and a timid smile began to grow, his small shoulders relaxing for the first time since she'd met him.

'Yeah,' he agreed. 'Yeah, I'd reckon so.'


MissAbaddon
03/23

Besties
My love

ICE TEA



Reflections

CaptainsQuarter

Brandishing a plastic bowl in one latex-gloved hand and a brush in the other, Irene studies her handiwork – a long, amalgamated mass of wet hair. “I think I got it all. Forty minutes. Start your timer, Gianni.”

The sound of nails clicking against a phone screen is the only answer she gets. It’s audible for a brief moment before the speakers on the bathroom counter, hooked up to her iPod, start blasting another song.

As she goes to rinse the bowl and brush in the sink, she glances into the mirror, smiling at the three figures reflected in it.

It’s not often that she gets to see these two. Living in different countries makes it difficult. That makes it more special when they *are* in town, though.

So, there’s no way she’s going to sit and make small talk with a bunch of geezers at the family reunion still bustling outside.

She calls Ryosuke a cousin, though – quite frankly – the family tree’s a hot mess on his end. Her dad and great-grandpa always make a point of flying him out from Japan for these things.

He fixes his hair in the mirror, placing each curl *just so* and brushing the rest back with his fingers, his hips swaying to the music. “Forty minutes’ll dry his ends out like crazy. Do thirty, tops.”

“We’re going from black to blond, dude,” Irene says. “Trust me, it’ll take longer than you think. Unless you want him stuck with dishwater bleach hair.”

Gianni finally turns around from where he’s seated on the edge of the bathtub. “I’ll do thirty-five. Is that fair?”

Ryosuke cringes, but shrugs in defeat. “Whatever. Can’t believe you

actually *bleached* it. Don't do that again for a while. It'll –"

"It'll make you bald and shriveled up like that bitch from *Lord of the Rings,* yeah, we get it." Irene sets the dying materials aside and tosses her gloves in the trash.

"What, you wanna send him back to Italy with a receding hairline?"

"I wanna send him back to Italy –" She snatches the empty dye box from the counter and reads the name. *"Golden Breeze Blond."*

A few taps, and Gianni changes the timer on his phone. "I'd prefer the latter, I think."

Gianni's not actually a relative. He's a family friend, more accurately – a former exchange student who stayed with her family for a summer. Still, he's basically family at this point. Irene thanks the lord for MSN Messenger and sketchy free texting apps; otherwise, the two of them would've racked up millions in international fees over the years.

Besides, he even inherited a birthmark from his own family, just like Irene and Ryosuke. It doesn't matter that they're not visually similar – in their hearts, the star-shaped birthmarks on their shoulders and the black dots lining the shell of Gianni's ear are connected.

Irene sets the box back on the counter and fixes her own hair. "Hey, I've been bleaching for years, and I'm not bald yet."

"Yet." Ryosuke glances at her reflection. "You ever think about wearing your hair different, Irene?"

"How so?"

"I dunno. You wear it down a lot."

"Says the guy who's had the same hairstyle since he was, like, five."

Ryosuke huffs. "Hey, seeing Michael on the cover of *Bad* changed me, okay?"

"Whatever. What should I do different?"

"I could braid it," Gianni says before poking at something on his phone screen. "How do I... unfreeze this? My screen is frozen."

Ryosuke snatches it from his hand, and a click echoes through the room when he presses the power button. “Turn it on and back off again. Fixes everything.”

Sure enough, when he turns it on again, it’s unfrozen.

Gianni holds his hand out, trying to take it back. “Thank you. I don’t understand these new smartphones –”

“Who the hell’s this guy on your lock screen?”

Irene leans over and gasps when she sees the face, partially shrouded by the time. “Oh, Gianni, you didn’t tell me it was *official!*”

She’s only seen him in grainy images Gianni’s sent before – mostly group pictures of his eclectic circle of friends back home – but she’s heard plenty about him through Gianni’s sappy late-night ramblings. He’s a thin, lanky boy around Gianni’s age, with haphazardly-cut strawberry blond bangs hanging in front of his face. In the lock screen photo, he’s cuddled up close to a smiling Gianni and looking pointedly away from the camera, his lips curled in a flustered pout.

Gianni snatches his phone out of Ryosuke’s hand, cheeks red. “I – well, it was fairly recent. There hasn’t been an opportunity for me to bring it up.”

“Wait, is that – are you dating Ricotta? Your weird nerd friend?”

“Ryosuke.” Irene lightly punches his shoulder.

“Hey, I don’t mean it in, like, a mean way. He’s objectively a nerdy guy. You’re just defending him ‘cause your boyfriend’s a weird nerd, too.”

“Anakiss is *not* a weird nerd.” She pauses. “...Okay, he’s a weird nerd. But I like him.”

Gianni takes another look at his phone screen, and a tiny grin pulls at the edges of his mouth. “I like my weird nerd, too.”

Ryosuke gags. “Gross. At least tell me your first date was better than Irene’s.”

“It was. We had coffee, and he took me to an indoor flower garden, with plants from all over the world, and...”

"I dunno," Irene interjects, "Anakiss bringing me to his house to look at his Lego sets kinda gives that a run for its money. He had a whole Batcave built and everything."

She chuckles at the memory, but stops when Gianni stays silent. "You alright there?"

"This is going to sound strange," he says, wringing his hands in his lap, "but… do you ever get deja vu?"

Suddenly, something tightens in her chest. "How so?"

"I… I had a wonderful time on that date, believe me. But something about that setting was like… a reminder. Of what, I don't know. Something kept telling me I'd been surrounded by those flowers before. Like I was connected to them. I know this sounds melodramatic, but I saw lilies, I believe, wrapped around a pillar, and I couldn't stop shaking.

And then… Ricotta. There's an image in my mind – him against a backdrop of violets – that's stuck with me. What disturbed me most was," Gianni hesitates, "there was a greenhouse for tropical plants. They had a rafflesia: the largest flower in the world. It smells like a corpse. I held his hand, and turned to him, and I couldn't help but think we'd been together like that before. Together with the stench of death in the air."

Irene doesn't respond. Can't, really.

Ryosuke laughs, but it's shaky. Uncertain. "Jesus. You sure you want to date this guy?"

And Gianni returns it, smoother, his usual poise lacing his voice once again. "I'm certain. It's quite romantic, if you think about it, isn't it?"

Irene turns back to the counter. Her eyes catch a speck of gold staining the laminate, and she grabs a tissue to wipe it away.

Anything to keep her hands busy. To keep her veins distracted from the chill coursing through them.

"My apologies. That was a weird tangent," Gianni says, avoiding her eye in the mirror. "It really was a lovely date –"

"I know what you mean." The words tumble from Irene's mouth before she can think.

"You do?"

She nods, closer to a tremble. "I feel it with Anakiss a lot. Since the first time we met. It was subtler back then, more like a nagging thought, I guess. But when I first met Emporio… that's when it got really bad."

She wouldn't trade that fateful night, nearly a year ago now, for the world. What began as a rather unlucky series of events, starting with Anakiss's car running low on gas in the middle of nowhere, brought her enduring friendships. Friendships that, should their paths have diverged even slightly, never would have come to be.

And she'd rather not picture what could've happened to Emporio, the poor kid, had she and Anakiss not stopped at that gas station. It's a relief to know he's safe with them, even if the question of *what happened to his parents, who abandoned him there in the first place,* wears at the back of her mind.

And yet. "I felt like I already knew him, somehow. I never even cared for kids that much, but I felt like I *had* to protect him. And then Eldis came along, and Dominic, and… I don't know. After talking to them for maybe an hour, it was like I'd had the same conversations with them before.

I get dreams, sometimes, about all of them. And, like, I think that's normal. Except they're always so *vivid* when they're there. Like I'm watching a movie I've already seen."

She takes a breath to speak again, to recall another scene: Emporio, awoken by nightmares in the early hours of the morning. Sitting on the sofa she and Anakiss had repurposed into his bed. Clutching her, before she could even get a word out, and muttering a name into her pajama shirt.

"J-Jolyne. Jolyne. I'm sorry."

But the memory tastes bitter on her tongue, constricts the air in her lungs, so she leaves it be.

Ryosuke laughs again, even weaker this time. More of a gasp. “Sounds like I’m not the only one, then. I always thought it was just something about Morioh. There’s gotta be a word for it. Nostalgia, sorta?”

With that, the room falls silent, aside from the iPod playing some pop ballad and the distant echo of the gathering outside.

Irene almost jumps out of her skin when Gianni’s timer goes off, sending a marimba melody careening into her eardrums.

“Okay,” Ryosuke says, “time to get that gunk outta your hair.”

They maneuver a stool over for Gianni to sit on, then have him lean backwards over the edge of the bathtub – *“I feel like I’m getting baptized,”* Irene hears him mumble. From there, washing the excess dye out of his hair is easy enough. She’s done it herself, though on a lesser scale, countless times.

She’s almost done drying it, cupping handfuls of his curls into the diffuser, when he speaks up again. “Like I said earlier, I could braid your hair, if you’d like.”

She shrugs. “Sure. Why not?”

“Ooh, Gianni, let me braid yours, too,” Ryosuke says. “I think that’d look good. Especially with the new color.”

“I thought you were against him going blond,” Irene responds.

“Too late to stop it now. I can live with it. Just keep that dye away from me.” He runs a protective hand over his own curls.

Irene decides against teasing him further. She turns off the hair dryer and sets it aside. “What do you think, Gianni?”

He studies his reflection in the mirror, stroking his fingers gently through the now-golden locks, and smiles. “I like it.”

“Awesome. Braid time, then?”

The three of them line up along the counter – Irene’s back to Gianni, Gianni’s to Ryosuke – and get to work.

“Ryosuke,” Irene calls back to him, “You should do something

different, too."

His nose scrunches up. "I dunno. It's not like I can make it any better than it already is."

She glances at the iPod's screen as it transitions into another song. An idea pops into her head at the sight of the tiny album icon. "You should do it like Prince. You could pull it off."

Based on his facial expression, she may as well have suggested sacrilege. But he finishes Gianni's braid and takes a quick glance into the mirror. "I'll… try it. For five seconds. And then I'm going back, you hear me?"

He flips his head over and combs his curls forward with his fingers.

With a final, subtle tug, Gianni ties back Irene's own braid. "I'm done."

"Thanks, man." Irene turns to look into the mirror, to study Gianni's handiwork –

She freezes.

Her heart skips a beat, then *pounds,* sending a dizzying wave to her brain.

She can't explain it, because it can't be possible. But that is not her reflection.

Those are someone else's eyes.

She wrenches her gaze from herself *(herself?)* in the mirror, instead turning to Gianni and Ryosuke.

They're both deathly still.

Gianni's brow furrows, staring at the golden braid hanging over his shoulder, the exposed dots on his ear.

Ryosuke's hair is piled on top of his head in a messy pompadour. Somehow, she's sure that the disarray isn't what's caused the color to drain from his face.

After a few seconds, each feeling more like an eternity, they blink, seemingly coming back to their senses.

"Deja vu," Irene mutters, her throat dry.

Ryosuke shakes his head and pushes his hair back into place. “Weird. Th-that’s why I don’t mess with it. Don’t mess with perfection, right?”

Gianni simply hums, refusing to look back in the mirror. He takes his phone from his pocket and glances at the time. “I think your dad said dinner would be ready by five thirty, Irene. We should head back out.”

“Yeah. Good idea.”

When Irene and Gianni both free their hair from their braids, none of them say a word.

Irene shuts off the iPod, and after the others leave the room, she dares to take another glance into the mirror.

Irene, she tells herself, staring into her own eyes. *That’s Irene. I’m Irene.*

And as she turns off the light and shuts the door behind her, she ignores the echo of another name lingering in her mind.

20% off
I want believe
VENTO AUREO

UPON A BIRD'S WING
SINGS THE TAILWIND THROUGH MY HAIR
CRADELLING MY SOUL
PROTECT ME FROM GRAVITY
SO I MAY STAY A FREE BIRD
RYKIEL

Green
Dolphi
LOTTO
INJURY is
PERSONAL
to me.
SMOKING
KILLS
GREETING CARDS
$2
MIULLER
SKY
Chips

VOGUE
Fly High with Gucci's
2023 Spring Collection
IRENE KOCHO
SPREADS HER WINGS

HELLO,
MY NAME
IS JJ

GDSTU

GDSTU

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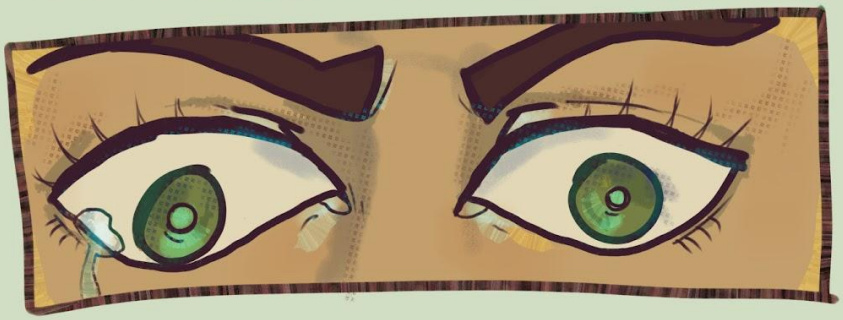


It’s not living (if it’s not with you)

athanor

once our wounds that don't disappear even with age have healed,
let's meet again.

— ivory, TOOBOE

The full moon shines in a starless night.

Clouds the colour of death mutedly highlight its yellowish glow from the open window. The raging storm that had nearly taken him by surprise in the afternoon had calmed down now, but the wind is still wet with the promise of rain, and Theodore can feel it in the way his face turns numb with chilly moisture at every gust of wind that blows in from outside.

He blinks slowly, listening to the soft rumbles of thunder; watching, with a strange sense of detachment, the pitch-black nothing from beyond the bedroom window. Heat seeps from his fingers as he absent-mindedly trails them back and forth the window ledge, leaving them ice-cold.

Everything had happened so fast he's still having a little trouble wrapping his head around it all: just a few hours ago he had been stranded in the middle of nowhere, seconds away from being thoroughly drenched by the incoming storm and semi-delirious with a fever. Now he has a roof over his head for the first time in a week, an invitation to stay for as long as it takes to recover from his illness, and… friends. Friends?

No...no. Theodore knows it's something more.

He saw it in the thousand-yard stare that little kid — Emporio had sported when they first met. He saw it in the way Emporio had cried and wailed and babbled apologies when he introduced himself, the way he threw his tiny arms around Theodore, stubby fingers clutching his jacket so tightly he could feel them tremble against his back, refusing to let go for nearly the entire car ride.

Theodore had barely caught anything from Emporio's garbled sobbing in the car, but he had gleaned enough to understand that *something had happened.*

Something *bad*. Something so devastating and vast that even thinking about its magnitude scares him. Something involving his brother.

A sudden burst of wind catches him in the face, blasting him with a chilly mist of rain water. Theodore squeezes his eyes shut and flinches at the assault, ripping his hands away from the ledge and wiping at his face. After a few seconds of rapid blinking, he takes a deep, fortifying breath, yanks his hat more firmly down over his ears, then squeezes his massive body through the space between the windowpane and the ledge.

The wind attacks Theodore with a ferocity as soon as he touches down on damp, mushy earth. He winces, narrowing his eyes and zipping his jacket up all the way to cover his chin and fever-chapped lips, trying in vain to escape the sting of frigid water droplets raking slashes across his cheeks. He ignores the way his boots sink unpleasantly into the dirt and hoists his backpack over his shoulder, grunting with effort.

He doesn't want to leave.

God — he turns back and stares into the bedroom with a trembling arm braced against the lifted window pane, and he feels the dull, overpowering ache blossom in his chest like a nasty bruise — he *doesn't want to leave.*

The weight of the silver cross pendant around his neck makes its presence known, and as he clutches it in his fist he feels an older, deeper wound resurface, splitting open and spilling forth heartbreak, grief and desperation. It's been nearly two decades since Elias Pucci had vanished, and Theodore has just about sold his soul trying to find out, at the very least, what had happened to his twin brother. How can he stop his search now, knowing his brother had potentially been the catalyst for something terrible?

But...a phantom memory flashes briefly across Theodore's mind, one that makes his heart *clench*: long, thin somethings digging bluntly into his back, a warm body curled on top of him, the scent of bubblegum, and the same contentment — the same feeling of *home* and *alive* he so cruelly denies himself now.

The bed sheets are strewn messily over the mattress, still warm from his body heat, and Theodore wants — so desperately *wants* to crawl back under the covers; to curl up beneath the sheets and listen to the rain get louder against the window, to drift off to the quiet jazz wafting from somewhere downstairs. He's in a house full of complete strangers, and yet every single cell in his body screams *this is home, you are home.*

He doesn't know what to do.

It takes all his strength to slide the window shut and walk off into the night.

It's dark outside — the kind that hungered; a hulking, ravenous beast that swallowed everything in sight. Not even the light of the full moon penetrated the darkness fully. It was a physical, heavy thing, draping itself over Theodore so thoroughly he could barely beyond the front of his face; with the leaves and trees of the garden cut in sharp angles by the pale moonlight.

In the absence of light and his haste to leave, Theodore turns into a klutz: he nearly knocks himself out barreling headfirst into a tree, trips over some garden decor strewn across the grass, and turns the corner only to immediately collide with someone.

"Shit—" Theodore wraps his arms around their waist and yanks them flush against his body on instinct. The two of them teeter back and forth dangerously for a few seconds; their legs scuffling against each other and across the muddy ground to stay balanced, until Theodore's back thuds against a tree trunk and the other person falls against him with a startled yelp.

It's Anakiss. The moonlight, dappled through the leaves of the tree, casts faint patches of shadow and light across the planes of his face. This close up, Theodore can see the bloodshot veins and individual specks of violet in his eyes: teary, and so wide open the deep purple of his irises seem to shrink into pinpricks around his reddened sclera. His face is damp with tears, and Theodore can see the beginnings of thin, blunt welts carved down the swells of his cheeks.

'For dust thou art—' the verse comes to his head immediately, words branded into his memory from years of hearing his god-fearing brother recite them to him *'—and unto dust shalt thou return.'*

Theodore had met Anakiss and realised that not everyone was doomed to suffer dusty death; to crumble into nothingness and become lost to history. Anakiss, Theodore thinks, would have clawed his way out of the ashes reborn, like a Phoenix.

Theodore hasn't known Anakiss for very long, but he knows enough to be worried at Anakiss' faraway gaze, and the uncharacteristic way his body sluggishly slumps against his own. It feels *wrong* to witness such lifelessness in a person usually so *alive.* Anakiss' emotions had almost visibly thrummed underneath his skin; a volcano constantly on the verge of eruption. He flashed a vibrant hot pink that deterred, rather than attracted; a poison dart frog. Anasui had been brash and bold and never afraid to speak his mind, existing the way natural disasters did: unremorseful, dangerous, beautiful.

Wait. Theodore blinks once, twice, narrowing his eyes and frowning. *Anasui?* He's never met anyone called Anasui before. Why did this name come so naturally to his mind? Why does it rest so familiarly on his tongue?

"Anasui?" Theodore murmurs, then immediately regrets ever opening his mouth. Anakiss freezes, turning to marble under his touch.

"Don't," Anakiss makes a noise between a moan and a sob, face going pale and slack in horror. "Don't — oh *no*, no, no, no, no no *nonono* —" He starts shoving at Theodore's arms, sluggishly at first, then quickly gaining momentum into feral, vicious movements; raking painful scratches down

Theodore's arms when he tightens his hold on Anakiss in shock.

"Anakiss? *oh my god* — Anakiss, please calm down. I'm so sorry — Ana — *Anakiss —"* Theodore's voice shakes with panic. His eyes start to sting and water. He loosens his hold on Anakiss, gripping Anakiss' smaller, colder hands in his own wider, warmer ones and squeezing them together. He feels his own voice waver a little as he watches Anakiss start to cry in earnest; bowing his head to press their joined hands against his forehead. Fat tears trail blistering paths across both their knuckles as Anakiss' whole body trembles with suppressed wails.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry — please don't cry. Please don't — shh, *shhh."* Theodore carefully pries his hands free and ushers Anakiss into his arms, tucking Anakiss' head underneath his chin and practically *crushing* their bodies together. Theodore screws his eyes shut and buries his face into Anakiss' hair, trying to ignore the wetness beginning to roll down his own cheeks. He had expected Anakiss to fight back — to writhe and struggle against Theodore's hold. But Anakiss simply slouches fully into Theodore's hold, pressing his face into the hollow of Theodore's throat; eyes shut, like a baby animal.

Theodore doesn't know how long he stands there with Anakiss in his arms, whispering hushed apologies with his lips pressed to the side of Anakiss' temple under the moonlit tree. A part of him marvels at the way they fit so, *so* perfectly together — as if every dip and curve of Theodore's being had been shaped with the memory of Anakiss' body embedded into his very DNA. The bubble of melancholic serenity pops unceremoniously around the two of them only when a sudden clap of thunder spooks Anakiss so badly he startles right out of Theodore's embrace. The rain begins to come down harder and louder, threatening to drench them both in freezing rainwater.

Theodore had meant to leave. He had meant to put as much distance as he could from this house and the people that currently lived in it. He had meant to take off under the cover of the night, trusting the storm to cover up his tracks before anyone even realised he was gone. But the way Anakiss ducks his head and curls his fingers gently into the denim of his jacket, and twists his lips in embarrassment, face flushed pretty shades of red and pink...

"Come on," Theodore laces Anakiss' fingers together with his own, swiping a thumb gently across the back of Anakiss' hand. "We'll get sick out here. Let's go back home."

"We'll get sick out here." Anakiss parrots Theodore's words in a mocking drawl as he sneers, chucking a wet towel at the bed. He continues his tirade, ignoring Theodore's muffled cry when the towel hits his face with a sharp *slap!*

"You're already sick! Did you want to contract pneumonia or something?!" Anakiss' bares his teeth in a hiss, reaching over the bed to dig his fingers into Theodore's abdomen. When Theodore doubles over, wheezing from the vicious assault, Anakiss snatches up the towel and hurls it against the bedsheets beside him, before grabbing the thermometer from between Theodore's lips, inspecting the temperature with a scowl.

"This isn't funny!" Anakiss snaps, glowering at Theodore from across the room. Theodore shakes in silent mirth, unable to stop the helpless grin stretching across his face.

"You're so *vicious*," he chokes out in between bouts of laughter. "A tiny little thing. Like a kitten."

Anakiss twists his lips into a pout, face reddening in a mixture of exasperation and bashfulness. "Thirty-eight point six degrees." He kneels on the bed and leans over, brandishing the evidence directly in front of Theodore's eyes. "Celsius. You're insane, you know that? What were you even thinking? Why would you leave?"

"Ah." That sobers Theodore up quick. His grin wilts into a grimace. "Uh —"

"It's because of what Emporio said, isn't it?" Anakiss' gaze turns sad, hands trembling imperceptibly as he switches the thermometer off and puts it on the bedside table. "The thing about the world ending?"

"Can I brush your hair?" Theodore blurts out, gripping Anakiss' hand when he tries to draw back.

"What? Why?" Anakiss frowns at the non-sequitur, voice slightly hoarse with fatigue from the crying and shouting.

Theodore tugs Anakiss to sit closer to him, then leans over the bed to rummage through his travel backpack. He emerges after a few seconds, brandishing a comb and gesturing at Anakiss' twin bubblegum pink braids. They're dishevelled, like someone had mercilessly clawed through the plaits. They dangle on either sides of his face and trail down his front to rest at his collarbones, knotted up around his ears. Anakiss' eyes widen in surprise, revealing reddened, watery sclera that frame violent irises, sparkling with remnants of tears.

"Um. Okay." Anakiss flushes, ducking his head and shuffling along the mattress. He turns around and tosses his braids over his back to let them be taken apart and detangled.

"Yeowch." Theodore scrubs at Anakiss' scalp with the towel on the bed, trying to massage the sore spots before detangling them, and hisses at the splotches of crimson red staining the cream coloured cloth. "Did something attack you?"

"Uhh — no," Anakiss giggles nervously, bringing a hand up to scratch at his scalp. "I kind of...did it to myself? Sorry."

"Don't be," Theodore soothes, gently slapping away Anakiss' wandering hands and starting the painstaking process of detangling the knots in his hair. "Was it on purpose?"

"No, I— no." Anakiss hunches over, shame colouring his speech. "I have this...*problem*. I have this constant urge to take things apart."

"Sit up straight," Theodore taps Anakiss' thigh softly, and Anakiss complies with a shaky sigh, lifting his head up and carefully tossing his hair, now freshly combed and soft to the touch, over his back to be braided.

"It was usually normal things like a watch, phones...a car once, actually." Anakiss snorts. "I just...take them apart. Turn everything into a bunch of screws and bolts."

"Head up," Theodore places a large, warm palm on Anakiss' cheek, tilting his head up to take his hair partition.

"I don't even know why I'm telling you all this. We're *strangers*." Anakiss laments, nearly whining as he stares into Theodore's electric blue irises.

"Anakiss." Theodore puts down his comb, placing his other hand on Anakiss' other cheek, effectively sandwiching Anakiss in his warmth. "Do you believe in gravity?"

Anakiss blinks owlishly, once, twice. "Yes?"

Theodore's face wrinkles in a fond smile. "That's not what I meant. When I say "gravity", I mean "fate". The natural pull of the universe that draws people together. Do you believe in it?"

"Maybe?" Anakiss isn't really able to do much but frown with his face trapped between Theodore's hands like this. "I don't really understand."

"We've known each other before," Theodore murmurs, holding Anakiss' face steady. "In another life, another universe. The 'me' that existed before the world ended gave Emporio a part of my soul, and he returned it to me today. I have *memories*, now. Of my life before. *I know you*."

Anakiss can barely breathe. Theodore strokes tender circles with his thumbs at the skin underneath Anakiss' eyes. His eyes are so, so *mournful*, he can't stand it.

"You know everything?" Anakiss breathes, *"Everything?"*

"Almost." Theodore's voice is like the distant rumbling of thunder. So far away, but with the promise of something terrible.

"So you know," Anakiss' voice trembles, the faintest whisper, yet still much, much too loud. "that I almost killed."

Theodore smiles, sadly.

"I don't think I want to talk about this anymore." The sudden knowledge that he now stands at the precipice of a dark, dangerous unknown is too much for him to bear. Anakiss' bottom lip begins to tremble as he blinks rapidly, trying in vain to keep tears from spilling from his eyes. Theodore is quick to wipe them away.

"I'm sorry." Theodore presses a slow, lingering kiss to his forehead and lets Anakiss go, silently finishing the partitions and weaving his hair into two braids. The two of them curl up in the bed together, later on; Anakiss tucks his knees right into the divot between Theodore's ribs, and his cheek presses against Theodore's chest.

"You're warm," Anakiss murmurs into Theodore's shoulder, lips trailing cool paths that sting pleasantly across his feverish skin.

"I'm sick," Theodore sniffs wetly, grinning sleepily into Anakiss' hair as he feels more than hears Anakiss's groan, muffled into his collarbone. Anakiss shuffles further into his embrace, wrapping his arms around Theodore's bare torso.

"Don't care," Anakiss sighs, lazily rubbing his face against the base of Theodore's neck. He curls his fingers ever so slightly into Theodore's skin, snickering when Theodore shivers from the feeling of nails prickling his back. "I'm cold. Feels nice."

"Hm." Theodore's voice sends pleasant vibrations radiating across his body as he hums. "Go to sleep. If you get sick don't say I didn't warn you."

"You'll stay?" The hope is all too obvious in Anakiss' tone. Theodore goes silent for a while, blindly tucking a wayward strand of magenta hair behind Anakiss' ear.

"Yeah. I'll stay." He finally says, and relishes in the press of teeth against his throat as Anakiss breaks into a slow, wide grin.

7:25 pm
Irene Anakiss
mobile
Jamiroquai
Virtual Insa
Travelling

Found Compendium Spiral Notebook

cryingismystand

--------- Forwarded message ---------
From: <cryingismystand@swf.org>
Date: Fri, July 14, 2023 at 11:59 PM
Subject: Found Compendium Spiral Notebook

To: <All Clearance Level Five>

The following journal entries were procured by the Speed Wagon Foundation after the disappearance of Irene Kujo. Kujo is of the Joestar lineage and has been closely monitored by the SWF for stand-based phenoma. Since her disappearance, abnormal time-space anomalies have been detected throughout the Southern United States, such as multiple reports of the moon and the sun [**redacted to prevent further anomaly**], and in references of time in relation to Irene and her family. Most reports have been attributed to the "Mandela Effect" by civilians. This Effect is speculated to be directly caused by the Cape Canaveral Incident.
The current whereabouts of Kujo, Eldis [**redacted**], Anakiss [**redacted**], and Emporio [**redacted**] are unknown. The journal below details the speculative state of a mind affected by a stand that alters time. It is estimated that anomalies will continue without direct stand intervention. Further aid has been requested. Foundation members in the Japan precinct have been notified.

Attached transcribed entries:

June 10, 20XX

Anakiss recommended I start to keep a journal after the last nightmare. Personally, I think journaling is bullshit, but I don't know what else to do. The nights keep getting worse and nothing is working. My old man wants to send me to therapy, but some weird therapy in Dallas. I said no obviously. So here I am, writing this down. Hoping once I write it, it will stay out of my head I guess? I don't know.

I've never been a good writer so I'll just jump in. I'm at a beach. The wind is whipping around me. A man is standing in the water. Actually it's more like he's standing <u>on</u> the water. He's walking on it like he's Jesus or something. Which is funny, because he's dressed like a priest.

My dad is there. Ana is there. So is Eldis. So is Emporio. But something is wrong. The sky is wrong. I don't know how else to describe it.

It sounds like a dumb dream, right? But every time I dream about it, I wake up screaming. My entire body shakes, and okay, this is gonna sound crazy, but something in my chest feels like it's trying to come out of me?

I sound insane. I know. That's why I'm writing it out. I'm probably having stress dreams. Ana is supposed to propose to me and that's all I can think about right now. So hopefully this helps.

June 14, 20XX

I had the dream again, but this time I remember more. The sky was weird because it was moving way too fast. Like someone had fast forwarded time. The sun kept rising and setting, and the moon too. And I think it was because of the priest. Emporio was running away from him. Something was behind the priest too. Or, coming out of him maybe? I don't know how to describe it. It looked like some kind of mythical creature, half horse half man but not a centaur. I'll try to draw it. Actually you know what? I had something coming out of me too. They looked like strings.

My dad was dead in the dream. I don't know why I didn't notice it sooner. He was literally upside down in the waves of the ocean. It was definitely the ocean, somewhere tropical.

None of it makes any sense at all, so why does it freak me out so much? My mom is telling me to go see a doctor about the feeling in my chest, so I guess I'll go do that now? I'll take some melatonin before bed too.

There's something else about the dream. I think it's real. I know it sounds crazy, I know that makes zero sense, but something is just telling me.

June 19, 20XX

I think I'm finally losing it. I saw something come out of my dad today.

He came to visit me to see how I was doing. I thought he had brought someone with him at first. It looked like a man wearing gladiator clothes. He had black hair floating above him like he was underwater. I swear that I could see stars flickering in his hair like it was the night sky. Oh and his skin was bright purple.

When he caught my eye, he vanished.

I haven't told my dad yet. I think he'd send me off to a mental institute. Maybe that's what's in Dallas.

June 20, 20XX

The thing that came out of my dad was in the dream. I'm so sure of it now.

What's happening?

June 23, 20XX

I know I'm not crazy anymore. I know something is going on, and for some reason, no one is telling me.

I asked Eldis and Emporio to come over today, mostly because the dreams are killing me, and I'm willing to try anything at this point. I thought maybe I missed them or something? Who knows.

I was describing the dream to them. Eldis said it sounds like just a bad nightmare. But Emporio would not meet my eyes. I asked him what he thought and he acted so shifty..

It's obvious there's something he's not telling me. It's strange though, because what the hell does that mean? Why would he know anything? He's just a kid.

June 24, 20XX

Anakiss had the same dream. And I mean exactly the same. He pulled out details that I never even shared with him. Like the weird beings appearing out of us. Like Emporio being led away by a dolphin.

And he felt the same as me. He felt like it was real.

We finally talked to Emporio and...I was right. He knew the whole dream, and he said he was there.

Everything I dreamed of really happened in another life. Tomorrow night, we're gonna sit down and figure out what it was. I'm so relieved. All this time I thought I was losing my mind. Hopefully I'll get the answers I need to finally get some sleep.

July 5, 20XX

My name is not Irene. Or it's not Jolyne. I don't know.

The way I can best describe it is like having 2 sets of memories. And when they meet, I have nightmares. I can't think correctly. I feel insane.

This was the aftermath of Pucci. That's the priest's name. With everyone's help, we erased him from existence. Emporio was the only one to survive the end of the world, which is why he remembers. But I remember too, only in my dreams, and I shouldn't.

My father believes me. I don't think he remembers, but the man that appears out of him, he's real. He calls it a stand. He says I probably have one too. Maybe I'll meet her. I don't know if I want to. I think she's in the strings.

Dad said there might be one solution. A friend in Japan who would be willing to "fix" this.

I feel really sad. On one hand, the world before was worse. I was in prison. My parent's divorce was worse. And some crazy vampire went on a rampage somewhere.

But...it's important. Too important to lose. I know it is. I feel like it's a part of me. Even now, I see my fingers turn into strings. Will I lose that if I go to Japan? Do I want to return to a world where I'm only Irene? But to choose the other is death. I know it.

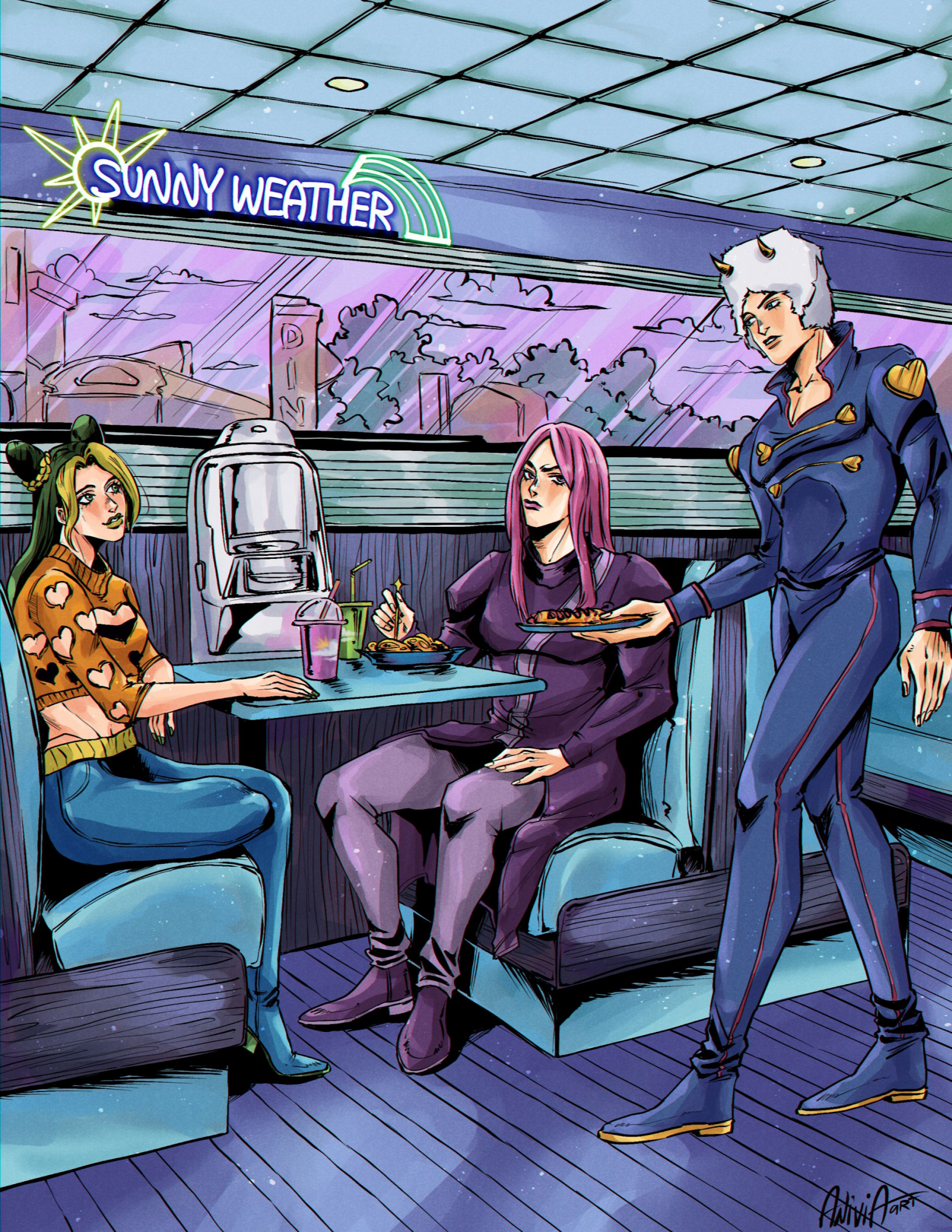
I know I have to go. I don't know what I'll find. But I have to find a way to keep Irene and Jolyne. My head hurts so bad just thinking about them together. BUt they're me, and I need all of me.

Dad, if you find this, I'm sorry. I'll come home soon. I'm not alone, and I'm sure I'll be safe. I have to figure this out.

Signing off,

Jolyne + Irene

Malakarta


SUNNY WEATHER
DINER

SAKEOZO
DO WE HAVE YOUR BLESSING?
SAKEOZO

I'VE ALWAYS
CHERISHED YOU.

CONTRIBUTORS
ZINE

This zine is interactive! Click on an artist's work or social media to be taken directly to their page!

Andrey

pg. 1 (Cover)

Gyrosaur

Versomni_

Ulti

pg. 4

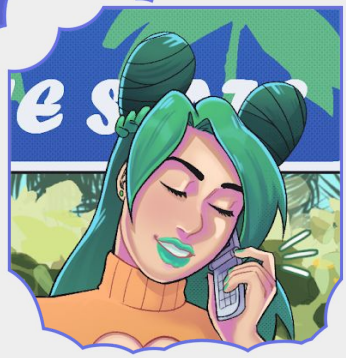
theultione

silent.requiem

Mar

pg. 5

chocomar_art



Anya

pg. 6

kumateeth

Ana

pgs. 7-9, 83-85

wolfrey_art

wolfrey_art

Wes

pgs. 10-20

rapscallionrab

rapscallionrabbit

Azélie

pgs. 21-22

azelie_cdrc

Aerial Artistic

pg. 23

aerialartistic

aerial_artistic

Haku

pgs. 24

haku_greenfinch

haku_greenfinch

Alex

pgs. 25-37

Vanya_Instance

Vanya_Instance

Abaddon

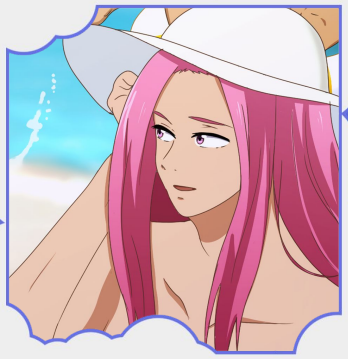
pg. 38

miss_abaddon

Lexi G.

pg. 39

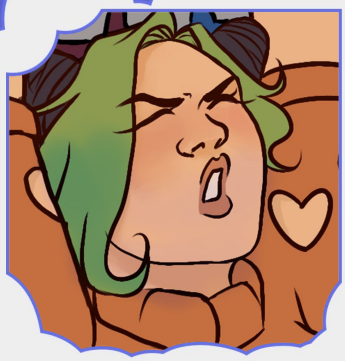
lexig_ designs



Teagan

pg. 40

sakuraa_tea



Bunny

pg. 41

cardialogium

AQ

pg. 42

arojotaro

Whammie

pg. 43

whammiie

Davy

pgs. 44-51

CaptainsQuarter

Sammi

pg. 52

goatpaste

呉

pg. 53

yumigahara

Mars

pg. 54

LookimaGhostArt

Laney

pg. 55

ArtCzar_

Pedro

pg. 56

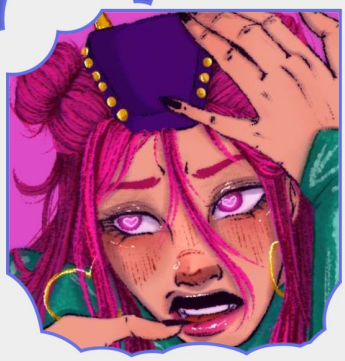
kinds_the

Ella

pg. 57

warmtoastysock

warmtoastysock



Athanor

pgs. 58-69

ath-anor

hersheybaraa

Sara

pg. 70

bishoujo.bitch

bishoujobitch

Teeth Sponge

pg. 71

TeethSponge

Penny

pg. 72

pennovich

Angel

pg. 73

geminop3

geminop3

Krysta

pg. 74

mrkrysta_

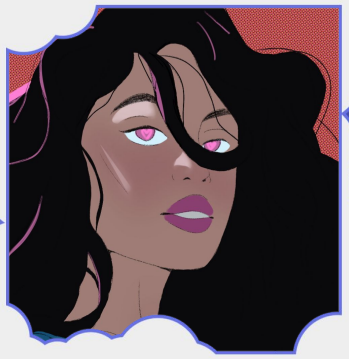
mskrysta-art

sboopie

pg. 75

sbooopie

sboopie



Idalís

pgs. 76-80

cryingismystand

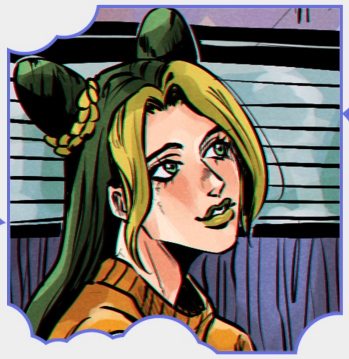
cryingismystand

Mal

pgs. 81

malakartz

malakartz



aNiVia

pg. 82

anivia_art

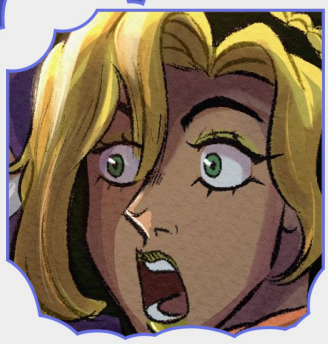
Sakeozo

pg. 83

Sakeozo

CONTRIBUTORS

MERCH



Anj

Phone Wallpaper

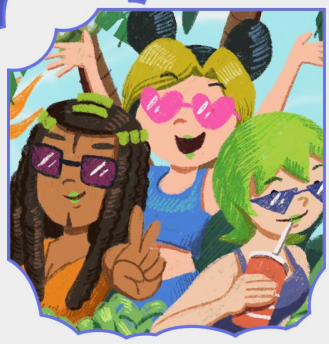
ubetaro_

ubetar0

Ginger

Phone Wallpaper

GarlicWithBread



Jana

Sticker Sheet

jananachips

jananachips

Pibmoru

Profile Pictures

pibmoru

Tidal

Paper Doll

TidalWaveKitty

“Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world”
– Louis Armstrong